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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0437
INFO RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 0228
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0322
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 2403
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 0073
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0103
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 0243
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 001962

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/02/2016
TAGS: PREL MARR LE SY SP
SUBJECT: SPAIN ON SYRIA/HIZBALLAH AND POSSIBLE TROOP
CONTRIBUTION

Classified By: Poloff Ricardo Zuniga for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. The MOD Director General for Defense Policy told poloff on August 3 that, although Spanish FM Moratinos has said that it is "very premature" to talk about troop contributions before there is a UNSC resolution, Spain is likely to contribute 800 or more troops to an international effort in Lebanon. The press reports that Vice President Fernandez de la Vega said from Bolivia that the international community cannot send troops to Lebanon until there is a ceasefire. Traveling in Lebanon and Syria, FM Moratinos called for the disarmament of Hizballah and the deployment of the Lebanese military. He said that Syria had promised to exert its influence with Hizballah to help resolve the conflict. Asked whether his visit was an effort to ease Syria's diplomatic isolation, Moratinos responded that "it would be good to reestablish dialogue with Syria."
END SUMMARY.

-- SPAIN INCLINED TO CONTRIBUTE TROOPS --

¶2. (C/NF) MOD Director General for Defense Policy General Benito Raggio reiterated the public comments of FM Moratinos (and President Zapatero's office) that it is premature to talk about contributing troops to a peacekeeping force before there is a UN mandate for such a force. Raggio also noted the need for Parliamentary approval before the GOS can deploy troops overseas. Raggio went on to say, unofficially, that the GOS is inclined to make a contribution. He said that, considering Lebanon's proximity and Spain's interest in Mediterranean security, Spain would want to be a part of whatever solution is created.

¶3. (C/NF) Raggio noted that Spain currently has about 2200 troops overseas, well within the ceiling of 3000 that the GOS currently has authorized. (NOTE. Spain intends to withdraw many of its 500 troops from the EU force in Bosnia, so the figure of 2200 will drop over the next few months. END NOTE.) He said that Spain would consider sending 800 or more troops, including an infantry battalion and support units. Raggio pointed out that Spain has a battalion currently assigned to the NATO Response Force that is prepared to deploy within five days of receiving orders.

-- MORATINOS IN THE MIDDLE EAST --

¶4. (U) FM Moratinos completed a visit to Lebanon and Syria on August 3 and was scheduled to return to Madrid August 3. According to press reporting, Moratinos met with Lebanese PM

Siniora and Lebanese political figures (including Hizballah representative Nabih Berri), accompanied by the Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers. In this meeting, Moratinos reportedly called for the disarmament of Hizballah and the deployment of Lebanese forces to the border area. In Syria, reports indicate that Moratinos met with Syrian President Bashar Assad, Vice President Faruk al Share, and Foreign Minister Walid Moalem. In a press conference before departing Damascus, Moratinos said he had "asked Syria to play a constructive role in this very serious situation and (Syria provided) a positive answer... Syria promised to exert their influence with Hizballah, but the political and military context in Lebanon must change." Asked whether his visit was an effort to ease Syria's diplomatic isolation, Moratinos responded that "it would be good to reestablish dialogue with Syria."

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